AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Where claims have been amended and/or canceled, such amendments and/or cancellations are done without prejudice and/or waiver and/or disclaimer to the claimed and/or disclosed subject matter, and Applicants reserve the right to claim this subject matter and/or other disclosed subject matter in a continuing application or otherwise.

Claims 1-5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended) A pathway determination system for a data storage system comprising N storage devices and more than N pathways for retrieving requested data from the data storage system, the pathway determination system comprising: The system according to claim 5,

a sorter capable of receiving a read request and separating the read request into an appropriate segment size for sending to the storage devices of the data storage system;

an assigner comprising:

a permutation generator capable of generating a reduced number of read permutations based at least in part on queue length information and estimated current cost information, and

a cost calculator capable of calculating an expense of each permutation based on a predetermined metric, the cost calculator being capable of utilizing the queue length information and the estimated current cost information, and wherein the cost calculator being is capable of calculating the expense of each permutation further based at least in part on performance information received from the storage devices of the storage system,

the assigner being capable of selecting a read permutation satisfying the received read request, the selected read permutation being based at least in part on the predetermined metric, and the assigner being capable of sending the selected read permutation to the storage devices of the storage system; and

a collector capable of receiving the requested data from the N storage devices in response to the selected read permutation being sent to the storage devices.

Claims 7-18. (canceled)

19.   (currently amended) A method for determining a pathway for obtaining data stored in a data storage system comprising N storage devices and more than N pathways for retrieving requested data from the data storage system, the method comprising:The method according to claim 18,

receiving a read request from a requester;

separating the read request into an appropriate segment and size for sending the storage devices of the data storage system;

generating queue length information and estimated current cost information;

generating a reduced number of read permutations based at least in part on the queue length information and the estimated current cost information, the read permutations satisfying the received read request;

calculating an expense of each permutation based at least in part on a predetermined metric and wherein calculating the expense of each permutation is further based at least in part on performance information received from the storage devices of the storage system;

selecting a read permutation from possible read permutations satisfying the received read request;

sending the selected read permutation to the storage devices of the storage system;

receiving the requested data from the N storage devices in response to the selected read permutation being sent to the storage devices; and

returning the satisfied read request to the requester.

Claims 20-26. (canceled)